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AFGHANISTAN: PARTIAL SOVIET WITHDRAWALS

Q: What is your assessment of the six regiments to be withdrawn?
OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF THE REGIMENTS TO BE WITHDRAWN
LEADS US TO QUESTION WHETHER THERE WILL BE A NET REDUCTION IN
SOVIET MILITARY CAPABILITIES IN AFGHANISTAN. FOUR OF THE SIX
REGIMENTS - 3 AIR DEFENSE, 1 TANK -- HAVE NOT BEEN ACTIVE IN
COMBAT.

THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE CLEARLY HAS NO AIR FORCE; THE
SOVIETS' SOLE REMAINING TANK REGIMENT HAS LONG BEEN
UNDERSTRENGTH AND ITS TANKS DISPERSED AND LARGELY EMPLOYED IN
STATIC DEFENSE ROLES WHERE MORTARS AND MINES WOULD BE MORE
APPROPRIATE.

SINCE 1979, THE SOVIETS HAVE STEADILY ALTERED THEIR FORCE
STRUCTURE TO ONE MORE APPROPRIATE TO COUNTER-INSURGENCY. FOR
EXAMPLE, THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF
SOVIET SPECIAL PURPOSE FORCES, THE SPETSNAZ. THERE ARE NOW
SOME 4000 OF THESE HIGHLY TRAINED TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN,
PERHAPS DOUBLE THE 1983 LEVEL.

THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE SIX SOVIET REGIMENTS IDENTIFIED BY
GORBACHEV MAY BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THIS CONTINUING SOVIET
EFFORT TO RESHAPE ITS ARMY IN AFGHANISTAN INTO A MORE EFFECTIVE
ANTI-GUERILLA FORCE.

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AFGHANISTAN: PARTIAL SOVIET WITHDRAWALS

Q: Do you have any comment on Gorbachev's intention to withdraw six Soviet regiments from Afghanistan. We understand that the withdrawals may be imminent.

A: THE US IS INTERESTED IN A COMPREHENSIVE SOLUTION TO THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN. THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IS SOVIET REFUSAL TO PRESENT A REALISTIC WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLE AT GENEVA FOR THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF THEIR TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN.

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NEA PRESS GUIDANCE

AFGHANISTAN: PARTIAL SOVIET WITHDRAWALS

Q: Gorbachev has characterized his intention to withdraw six regiments from Afghanistan as a concrete step which requires reciprocation to hasten a political settlement? Is the US/Pakistan prepared to reciprocate? If not, why not?

A: THE USG HAS ALREADY AGREED TO SUPPORT A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. IF THIS PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL IS MEANT TO SIGNAL A WILLINGNESS TO GET ALL SOVIET TROOPS OUT OF AFGHANISTAN, IT IS WELCOME, BUT THE NEXT STEP SHOULD BE A PROMPT TABLING OF A TIMETABLE FOR THE EARLY WITHDRAWAL OF ALL SOVIET FORCES.

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July 28, 1986

SIX SOVIET REGIMENTS TO WITHDRAW FROM AFGHANISTAN

Q: Can you comment on General Secretary Gorbachev's announcement that six regiments would be withdrawn from Afghanistan before year's end?

A: CONCERNING MR. GORBACHEV'S SPECIFIC STATEMENT, I WOULD NOTE THAT SIMILAR WITHDRAWALS ANNOUNCED IN THE PAST WERE ^{not} SUBSUMED IN REGULAR ROTATIONS OF TROOPS WITHOUT ANY DECREASE IN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF OCCUPYING FORCES. ^{we} WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THE PRESENT PROPOSAL IS ANYTHING MORE THAN THOSE PREVIOUS PHANTOM WITHDRAWALS.]

THERE IS ONLY ONE ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION TO THE SOVIET OCCUPATION OF AFGHANISTAN - THE PROMPT AND COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF THE APPROXIMATELY ^{118,000} 120,000 SOVIET TROOPS IN THAT [WAR-TORN] COUNTRY. IF THE SOVIETS ARE SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN A SETTLEMENT, THEY SHOULD PRESENT A SHORT WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLE AT THE NEXT ROUND OF UN-SPONSORED PROXIMITY TALKS SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN GENEVA ON JULY 30.

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